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(54) Entertainment machines

(57) An entertainment machine, such as a fruit machine, displays randomly selected combinations of symbols (A, B, C) and a reward indication (on digital display 12) is given if the combination is of a predetermined winning nature.

The player has the opportunity of increasing an attained reward by operating a gamble device (15, 16).

A selector (14) is provided so that the player can gamble a selected part only of the reward, the remainder being preserved and not gambled.

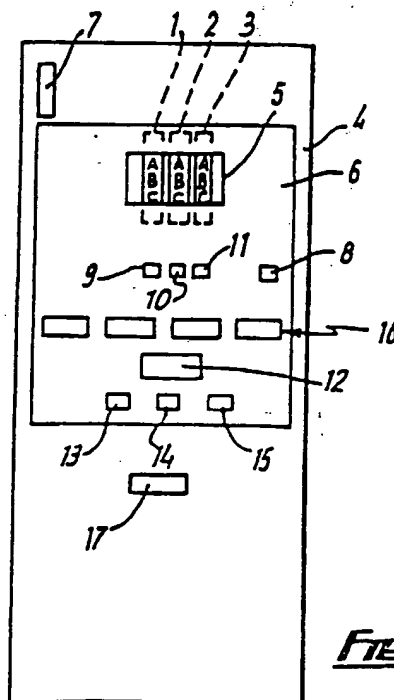
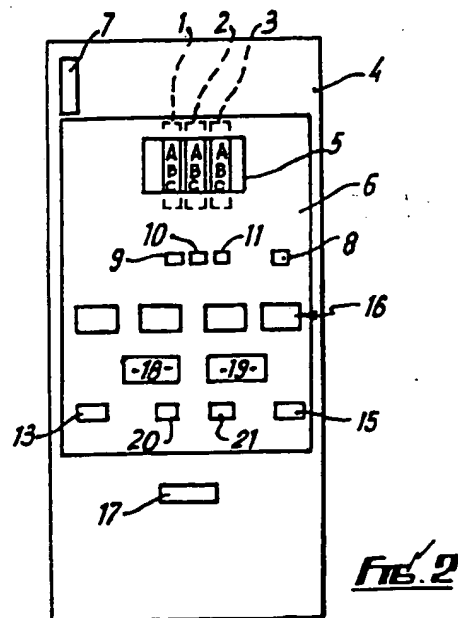
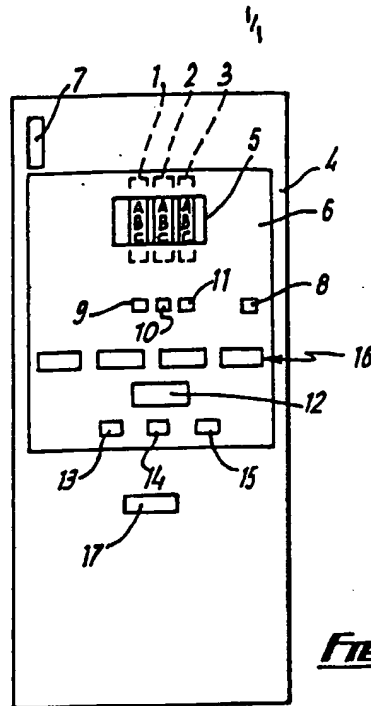


FIG. 1

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SPECIFICATION

Entertainment machines

- 5 This invention relates to coin- or token-operated entertainment machines and is particularly although not exclusively concerned with fruit machines.

- 10 It is known to provide a fruit machine with a "gamble" feature whereby, after attaining a win but before receiving a payout corresponding to the win, the player has the option of actuating a gamble device which operates on a random basis and can modify the payout by increasing or cancelling this. This feature advantageously contributes to the entertainment value of the machine.

- 20 However, a limitation may be imposed on such entertainment value in so far as the player is obliged to put at risk all (or in some cases one half) the attained win in order to take advantage of the gamble feature.

- 25 An object of the present invention is to remove or at least minimise this limitation and thereby provide a gamble feature of more extensive entertainment value.

- 30 According to the invention therefore there is provided a coin- or token-operated entertainment machine comprising a plurality of main display regions, means operable to produce a display of one or more symbols at each said region, some combination of said displayed symbols being winning combinations, a reward indicator operable to give an indication of an attained reward, and a gamble device operable to gamble said attained reward with the possibility of increasing or decreasing the value thereof, characterised in that there is provided a selection device operable to effect selection of a part of said attained reward to be gambled whilst the value of the remainder is preserved and not gambled.

- 45 With this arrangement entertainment can be promoted in that the gamble feature can be utilised without obligation to put at risk all of the attained reward.

- The said attained reward may constitute a monetary value (or number of tokens) to be paid out (or to be credited) to the player.

- 50 Alternatively or additionally the attained reward may relate to a special feature or features made available to the player. For example, the machine may have a device operable at the end of a game to adjust one or more of the visual displays with the aim of improving the final combination (such as a "nudge" device of the kind commonly used in fruit machines) and the attained reward may relate to the number or extent of available adjustments (such as the number of nudge steps).

60 Preferably the selection device is made available for manual operation by the player

- any desired part of the attained reward to be gambled (or at least any of a predetermined range of parts). Alternatively, it is possible to make the selection device available only on some occasions (which may be chosen at random) and/or to incorporate some element of automatic operation in relation to the selection device.

- 70 The said indicator preferably comprises a visual indicator, such as a digital display, and this may change to show the gambled part and/or the remainder on operation of the selection device. Thus, for example, the indicator may comprise a digital display which is decremented in appropriate steps as the selection device is operated until the desired part to be gambled is reached. The remainder may be awarded to the player at this stage and before the gamble device is operated or, alternatively, the remainder may be recorded (and if desired indicated on a further digital display) to be added to the increased or decreased award attained after the gamble operation.

- 80 The gamble device may be operable to give a single gamble opportunity. Alternatively multiple successive gamble opportunities may be made available (on a predetermined or random basis), and an opportunity may be given for operating said selection device before each gamble. In this case, the selection device may be operable optionally to increase the reward to be gambled by supplementing this from the said preserved remainder.

- 85 With regard to the said gamble device this may be arranged to be initiated, when made available for operation, by means of a press-button or the like. Moreover, the machine may incorporate a gamble indicator comprising an arrangement of indications representative respectively of different rewards and also a lost or nil reward, the appropriate such indication being illuminated after operation of the gamble device to indicate the new reward obtained (as described for example in our copending Application 2096376).

- 90 Most preferably, the machine of the invention is a fruit machine and the displayed symbols (which may be representations of fruit) are selected at random as by the rotation of reels (usually three or four reels) having such symbols marked around the periphery thereof, or by the operation of a vdu display simulating such rotation of reels (as described in our Patent No. 1,596,363) or by the random illumination of symbols on areas of a display panel or otherwise.

- 95 The invention will now be described further by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

100 Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic front view of one form of an entertainment machine according to the invention; and

The machine of Fig. 1 is a fruit machine having three reels 1,2,3 which are rotatable within a housing 4 behind a window 5 in a front panel 6.

- 5 Each reel 1,2,3 has pictures of fruit (designated A, B, C) at 20 positions around its periphery, and rotation of each reel is effected and also arrested by a microprocessor-controlled stepping motor, the arrangement being
10 such that the reel always comes to rest in precise registration with the window. Each stopping position is identified by the microprocessor control circuitry in known manner.

- In use, the machine is actuated by a player
15 by insertion of one or more coins or tokens into a coin mechanism 7 and a starter button 8 is pressed to cause the three reels 1,2,3 to rotate for different random periods of time before coming to rest. When the reels 1,2,3
20 come to rest, their stopping positions are identified and a win indication is produced in the event that the identified stopping positions correspond to the display of a predetermined winning combination of fruit (say three fruit of the same kind) at predetermined positions in
25 the window 5 (e.g. on a horizontal win line passing through the middle of three displayed fruit for each reel).

- There is a respective player-operable button
30 9,10,11 for each reel beneath the window 5, for "hold" and "nudge" features. At the start of some games, as selected on a random basis, the buttons 9-11 are made available for hold operation and when so operated by the
35 player the or each pertaining reel 1,2,3, is held against rotation during the course of the ensuing game. At the end of some games, as selected on a random basis, the buttons 9-11 are made available for nudge operation and
40 when so operated by the player the or each pertaining reel 1-3 is indexed through a number of steps (i.e. stopping positions) as determined by the action taken by the player and within the limits of a total permitted number
45 of nudge steps. Alternatively a player-initiated automatic nudge facility (which automatically nudges the reels through the optimum number of steps within the imposed limits) may be provided as described in Patent Application
50 2092797.

- Moreover, the machine has a reward indicator, comprising a digital display 12 which indicates the monetary value of an attained win, and three player-operable buttons 13,
55 14, 15 respectively for win collection, gamble selection and gamble purposes (yet to be described). A gamble display 16 is also provided on the front of the machine and this has indications which can be back illuminated
60 corresponding to the possible results of a gamble (e.g. lose X2 etc.).

On all occasions (or on some occasions as selected at random or otherwise) when a win

nation thereof) and if the player wishes all or part of the attained win, as shown on the display 12, can be gambled.

- If the player does not wish to gamble, the
70 win collection button 13 is pressed whereupon coins or tokens to the value of the displayed win are paid out to the player through an outlet 17.

- If the player wishes to gamble the entire
75 attained win, the gamble button 15 is pressed whereupon one of the said indications 16 is selected at random and the display 12 indicates the new win value (which will be greater or less than that originally indicated).

- If the player wishes to gamble only part of the attained win, the selection button 14 is first operated to reduce the indicated value on the display 12 to the desired part of the win. The arrangement may be such that the indicated win on the display decrements in appropriate steps (say in 10p amounts) whilst the
85 button 14 is held depressed. The remainder of the win which is not to be gambled may be paid out to the player at this stage (e.g. in correspondence with the decrementing of the display 12). When the button 14 is released the display is held at the selected value to be gambled.

- The arrangement may be such that the
95 player is only ever allowed one gamble per game in which case the appropriate payout (if any) corresponding to the new attained win is made automatically after the gamble is completed. Alternatively, the player may be allowed successive gambles as long as such
100 gambles are successful and until a maximum payout value has been reached in which case after each gamble (except the last permitted gamble) the player is given the option of pressing the collect button 13 or, optionally, the gamble button 15 (after first selecting the
105 part to be gambled with the button 14 if desired). After the last permitted gamble the resulting win (if any) is automatically paid out.

- The arrangement of Fig. 2 is similar to that of Fig. 1 except that there are two displays 18, 19 instead of the single display 12, and two selection buttons 20, 21 instead of the single button 14. With this arrangement the attained win is initially indicated on one display 19 and before operating the gamble
115 button 15, one of the selection buttons 20 is operated to transfer some or all of the indicated win to the other display 18. As the button 20 is pressed, the display 18 increments and the display 19 decrements. If the gamble button 15 is now pressed the amount indicated on the display 19 is gambled and the result is also shown on this display 19. If
120 a further gamble is permitted the player first has the opportunity of changing the amount to be gambled, for example by pressing the button 20 to transfer indicated value from the

the display 18 to the display 19 to increase the amount to be gambled). At any time the player can collect the winnings due by pressing the button 13 whereupon coins or tokens equal to the sum of the displays 18, 19 are paid out. The payout may be made automatically after the last permitted gamble.

It is of course to be understood that the invention is not intended to be restricted to the details of the above embodiments which are described by way of example only.

Thus, for example, alternatively or additionally to the above-described arrangement the display 12 or displays 18, 19 (or a further like display or displays) may indicate a reward other than a payout, for example, an available total number of nudge steps, and provision may be made for gambling this in the manner described above.

Also, instead of paying out an attained win this may be credited to the player for example as game plays.

CLAIMS

1. A coin- or token-operated entertainment machine comprising a plurality of main display regions, means operable to produce a display of one or more symbols at each said region, some combination of said displayed symbols being winning combinations, a reward indicator operable to give an indication of an attained reward, and a gamble device operable to gamble said attained reward with the possibility of increasing or decreasing the value thereof, characterised in that there is provided a selection device operable to effect selection of a part of said attained reward to be gambled whilst the value of the remainder is preserved and not gambled.

2. A machine according to claim 1, wherein the attained reward constitutes a monetary value to be paid out or credited to the player.

3. A machine according to claim 1, wherein the attained reward constitutes a special feature or features made available to the player.

4. A machine according to claim 3, wherein the special feature is a "nudge" adjustment feature and the attained reward relates to the number or extent of available adjustments.

5. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the selection device is made available for manual operation by the player whenever the gamble device is operable.

6. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the selection device is arranged to be operable by the player for the selection of any desired part of the attained reward to be gambled of a predetermined range of parts.

7. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the indicator comprises a visual indicator

play.

9. A machine according to claim 8, wherein the digital display changes to show the gambled part and/or the remainder on operation of the selection device.

10. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the gamble device is operable to give multiple successive gamble opportunities and an opportunity is given for operating said selection device before each gamble.

11. A machine according to claim 10, wherein the selection device is operable optionally to increase the reward to be gambled by supplementing this from a remainder preserved from a preceding gamble opportunity.

12. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein the gamble device is arranged to be initiated, when made available for operation, by means of a press-button.

13. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 12, including a gamble indicator comprising an arrangement of indications representative respectively of different rewards and also a lost or nil reward, the appropriate such indication being illuminated after operation of the gamble device to indicate the new reward obtained.

14. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 13, which is a fruit machine.

15. A machine according to claim 1, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.